

Matrimandir

November 2023



Who is building the Matrimandir?

The Mother, of course, with all Her streams of creative energy.

At one point, She said: The Matrimandir is directly under the influence of the Divine and certainly He arranges things better than we could do ourselves. (4 Oct 1971).

And, in a wider context: "The city will be built by what is invisible to you. The men who have to act as instruments will do so despite themselves. They are only puppets in the hands of larger Forces. Nothing depends on human beings—neither the planning nor the execution—nothing! That is why one can laugh." (1969)

But, on the ground, who are the foot soldiers? the laborers in the quarries of the gods?

Over the decades there have been thousands of these foot soldiers, some drawn by the magic of the early energy flooding the empty red plains, some drawn by the chance for a solid job, to earn wages to support their young families, and many others drawn by that Something in the air, that made them feel: "this is the

place... here I can be, I can contribute to the growth of this mysterious, magnetic project at the center of Auroville."

And so it went.... The very first contingent was composed of a few dozen Aurovilians in 1971 who ventured to begin the excavation of the crater for the foundations of Matrimandir. Digging in the early morning and the late afternoon with crowbars and mumpies they formed a first bold nucleus for the creative energy of the Mother to flow through.

Then, when it was seen that a more concerted workforce would be needed, villagers from surrounding villages were hired to push the excavation forward at a more rapid pace. Some 400 villagers dug out that vast crater over the following months, so that the foundation ceremony (the second one) could be held on Mother's birthday in 1972.

The crowds dissipated as the heavy work of construction began. A small team of Aurovilians remained on site daily to lay the foundation slab of Matrimandir, soon joined by a crew of carpenters to help build up slowly the wooden towers and shutterings for the concreting of the four massive



Beginning of excavation

pillars of the structure. In the background an Institute of structural engineers in Chennai assured the base of calculations needed to define the details for the RCC construction. Piero, architect and engineer, translated these pages of calculations into daily working drawings for the enthusiastic, but amateur crew on the ground.

Large happy crowds of Aurovilians and Ashramites would come each time there was concreting to be done... building up, level by level the main structure of the building. The top ring, joining the four great pillars, was cast by an Aurovilian crew on May 29 1976.

As early as October 1971 a keet and thatch camp had been established nearby to house about 20 of the Aurovilians who were onsite daily, dedicated to the construction. Over the next twenty years there was a steady flow of residents through this Matrimandir Workers Camp. Some stayed for years and some, with families now, shifted out as alternate housing accommodation was established within Auroville.

The decades passed... the eighties were slow, with a small crew on hand to build up the spherical outer frame of Matrimandir, making its 1100 precast concrete beams, lifting them into place by crane, and then – again in a series of big community events, - concreting them into place, row by row as the structure grew.

In the early 90's the Inner Chamber was completed with its marble walls and floor, the 12 columns and the central symbols installed by this same small dedicated crew.

During this period, external help was more and more called in: to design the air-conditioning for the



Excavation completion by the villagers by 21.02.1972

Chamber, to make the white woolen carpet that was to cover the entire Chamber floor, - and of course, to produce the Crystal globe and golden Sri Aurobindo's symbol stand that are the center of the room.

Piero, with his detailed engineering skills, developed in these years the sun tracking heliostat that was to bring the central sunray into the heart of the Chamber.

The work force grew, -an Auroville construction company was commissioned to produce the hundreds of triangular ferrocement panels that comprise the outer shell of Matrimandir. This team also built up the twelve Petals which surround the main building.

Then, in the second half of the 90's the workforce really began to expand as the push commenced to create the 1400 golden discs with their two million golden tiles and, soon after, to create the hundreds of triangular panels for the luminous inner skin of Matrimandir.

By 2006, there were some 300 people employed at Matrimandir accompanied by dozens of Aurovilians working on the site. Roger Anger, chief architect of Matrimandir, guided the finishing touches of the construction, such as the stepped marble pool below Matrimandir and the elegant fountain in the Garden of Unity, before he passed away in 2008.

All the time, the flow of Aurovilians and volunteers on the site continued, some spending just a few months here and some carrying on steadily over the years or decades. And some passed on, dear brothers and sisters leaving their bodies and the work to which they had committed much of their lives.... these departures are always a mystery... how could it be?... why did they leave? ... but finally one acknowledges that they came, gave their all, their best, until the Cosmic spirit called them to move on.



Concreting the elements of the space frame into position 1980 -1988

After the completion of the Matrimandir building in 2008, the work force was reduced to less than 100, - and work began to focus on the new field of construction of the twelve gardens. A plant nursery had already been established nearby in the early 70's for this future work, but now, at last, it was time to materialize the gardens. New energies appeared: designers, artists... creators in the garden world.

Now in 2023, with the added dimension of the Lake of Matrimandir being excavated, there are about 160 employees onsite working alongside sixty or so Aurovilians involved in the daily tasks. In addition to this daily crew there are many volunteers who come from all corners of India and the wider world helping out in the care of the gardens and Chamber.

There are now consultants in several fields, ranging from those who focus on the Lake engineering, to architects

moving forward with the program to relocate all our current buildings from their present positions within the lake area. We now even have a diving team, to dive in the Lake section 1 with their scuba gear to attend to details on the lake bed five meters under water. (soon to be 7 meters deep!)

Quietly working on site, we have masons building the new garden features and garden teams trimming the



The walls of the test Lake have now been raised to 8.3 meters height and waterproofed, ready to hold the rain water harvest from the upcoming monsoon.



The view from the new public viewing point

plants and grass on the 20 acres of Park of Unity. There are plumbers, electricians and metal workers, accountants and stock keepers, - all part of a smoothly functioning whole. It is a vast site, with a coordinated dance of teams of people attending to the multitude of tasks needed to maintain the site in all its beauty and to move forward with the construction of new features, be those the gardens, the oval road, the lake

or the new public viewing point which now overlooks the site from a point beyond the lake shore. There is even a special team onsite to clean the exterior of Matrimandir by descending with climbing ropes and harnesses each day to polish the golden discs. And always there are the teams who attend to the daily flow of guests and Aurovilians who come to sit for concentration in the Inner Chamber.



A vast harmony of energies...all supported of course by the worldwide family of donors and well-wishers who support the growth of Matrimandir.

We carry out our daily tasks, and we build best and most perfectly when our little selves are put aside so that the vast energies supporting these activities can flow, with a minimum of hindrance, through us.

Always, the joy of work is the sustaining note. The joy which has always carried the Matrimandir team forwards.

Work proceeds on the marble cladding of the Ray-like stream in the Garden of Light

* * *

Offering to Matrimandir

Please note that all offerings must be A/c Payee to Auroville Unity Fund. Cheques and Demand Drafts need to be accompanied by a letter / email from the donor specifying the offering is for Matrimandir along with PAN, full address, phone and email.

Offerings can also be made through direct Bank Transfer to Auroville Unity Fund. Please feel free to reach out to the Matrimandir Offerings Desk over email and phone for bank transfer details.

matrimandir.donation@auroville.org.in | 0413 - 2622051

Booking for Concentration in the Inner Chamber

Matrimandir Inner Chamber is open to visitors every morning except Tuesday and Sunday.

**Link for booking <https://mmaccess.auroville.org.in/visitors/new>
Matrimandir Access Group mmconcentration@auroville.org.in**